Class Unity in the Community (See page 5)

COMMEMORATOR

Published by the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party

Volume 7, Number 2 **Suggested Donation $1.50** **July 1997**

Dr. Betty Shabazz Dies

Courtesy of Marlene Krohn

The late Dr. Betty Shabazz, a leader and fighter, who continued to demand excellence and equality in the field of health, education and the cultural life of the poor and minority communities.

Dr. Betty Shabazz, civil rights leader, public speaker, college administrator, educator, registered nurse and widow of revolutionary leader El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X), died Monday, June 23, 1997, after clinging to life for three weeks with third-degree burns over 80% of her body, the victim of a fire at her Yonkers, New York apartment on June 1. Dr. Shabazz underwent five skin grafts and over 300 Bronx residents came forth to donate blood for her. She died at the Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx, among family members and friends.

Lifelong Dedication to Health and Education

Dr. Shabazz, born Betty Sanders in Detroit, Michigan, on May 28, 1936, pursued a life-long dedication to health and education. She attended the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and nursing school in New York. She was a 20-year old nursing school student when she met her future husband in 1956, then the minister at Mosque No. 7 in Harlem, a Nation of Islam Temple. In 1964, following her husband's conversion as a Sunni Muslim and choosing a new name, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, she became Betty Shabazz. Following Malcolm X's assassination in 1965, with four children and pregnant with twins, Betty Shabazz eventually returned to classes at Brooklyn State Hospital and earned certification as a registered nurse.

Years later, she earned a bachelor's degree in public health education and a master's degree in early childhood education at Jersey State College. She earned a doctorate in education administration from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1975.

Struggle for Freedom, Dignity and Self-determination

Dr. Shabazz, a leader in her community, the nation and the world, advocated justice for working poor and minority people on an international scale throughout her life. Since her husband's assassination, she has carried on the struggle for freedom, dignity, and self-determination which he championed.

As an educator, she lectured throughout the United States and the world, often at high school and college commencements and at events featuring the story of Malcolm X's life and his work. Dr. Shabazz held an administrative position within the City University system at Medgar Evers College in New York,

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Geronimo Released!

Fifteen days after winning a new trial for a murder he has always maintained he did not commit, Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt), former leader of the Black Panther Party in Los Angeles, was released on June 10, 1997 from the custody of the California state prison system after spending almost 27 years behind bars. Geronimo's release on $25,000 bail and a new trial, granted on the grounds that the murder conviction was tainted, were hailed worldwide. Orange County Superior Court Judge Everett Dickey had ruled that had Geronimo's attorneys and the jury known that chief prosecution witness Julius Butler was a paid police informant, not a sincere fellow Panther, "it would have permitted potentially devastating cross-examination" of Butler.

Geronimo was convicted of the robbery and murder of Caroline Olsen in Santa Monica in 1968.

Pratt, who claims to have been attending a Party meeting in Oakland at the time of the murder, vowed both to help get justice for the victim's family and to continue to fight for justice for the poor and minorities. Former Party members have blamed their silence at the time of Pratt's trial on FBI COINTELPRO (counterintelligence) tactics which pitted one group of Panthers, who voiced concern at that time that Pratt himself was a government informant, against another. In his decision, Judge Dickey noted the police and prosecutors, who hid the fact that Butler was an informer, were aware that Butler carried a weapon,

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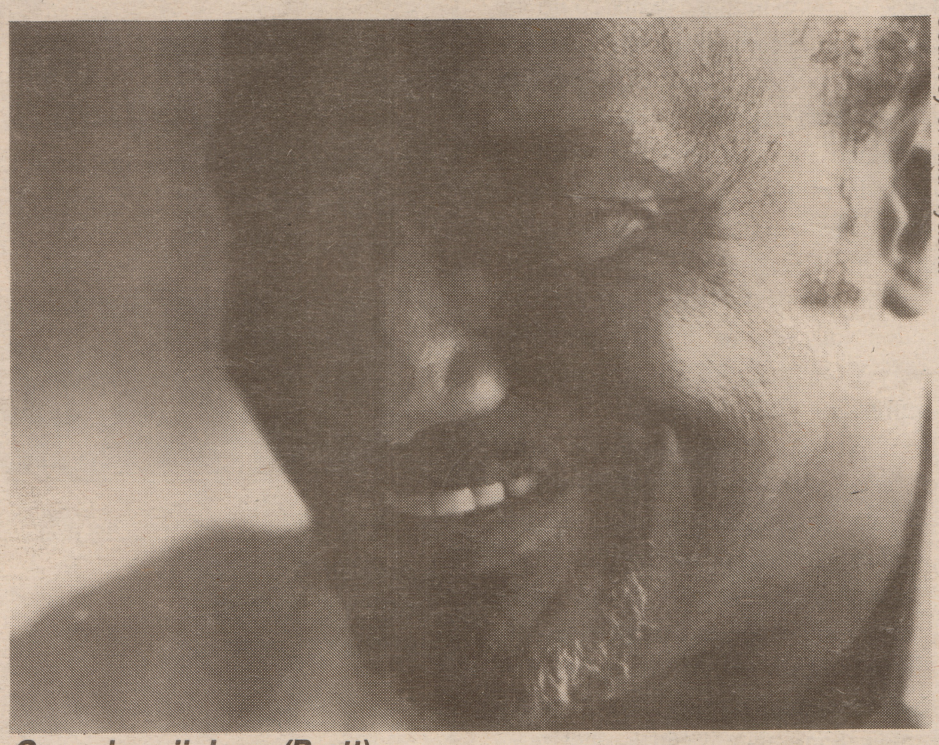

Courtesy of Kiilu Nyasha

Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt)

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Editorial

It's the Old Shell Game, Mama...

WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all its people and give a high standard of living. (BPP Point #2 — Ten Point Program)

The BPP Ten-Point Program sets forth a simple set of demands:

Racism is a juvenile personal attitude displaying emotional reaction to objective economic conditions where there are not enough jobs to go around and the needs of all workers are not met.

The call for, or against, government-sponsored "affirmative action" is not now and never has been a call to answer the real needs of our poor, underprivileged communities.

When Proposition 209, the so-called California Civil Rights Initiative (anti-affirmative action initiative) won at the California polls last November, University of California student protesters led the way in reacting to the threat to affirmative action programs; they said David Duke and the Klan were behind Proposition 209. Meanwhile, California Governor Pete Wilson, as Presidential candidate, declared that he would be the "triggerman" against government-sponsored "affirmative action."

Nowhere did the federal authors of government sponsored "affirmative action" call for a living wage and jobs for all.

Yet, without linking affirmative action to all the attacks on the economic status of working people in this country, those opposing it will remain doomed to reaction. The recent attacks on low-income workers supported by both the liberal and conservative establishment include the elimination of both living wage jobs and time-and-a-half pay for overtime, implementation of the three-strikes-you're-out criminal penalties while the government pours billions of tax dollars into building a prison industry, passage of the federal welfare reform bill (welfare to workfare) and elimination of Section 8 and other subsidized housing, not to mention allowing states to implement managed care programs in place of Medicare and Medicaid. Some things have become very clear — affirmative action is not a race issue; it's an economic issue, a labor issue.

Those who protest elimination of affirmative action as an attack on racial minorities have missed the true purpose of the civil rights movement and the degree of sophistication behind systematic racial oppression in United States.

Without dealing with the economic current that runs through policies of racial oppression, one can never resolve the issue of racial equality.

The BPP pointed out that racism in America, at its root, was a systemic problem, a structural problem. Its symptoms were seen in racial attitudes and racial discrimination by those who benefited from that system/that structure. To neutralize racism in America requires a fundamental change in the economic system, and the social and governmental structure which promotes it. That's where racialism comes in, the institutionalized form of racism.

For pointing this out, focusing on it, and pursuing a program to end racial oppression and oppression of the poor and all minorities, the BPP was attacked by the ruling structures and beaten down.

But sensing the people's desire for change, the power structure offered symptomatic relief, with civil rights laws and affirmative action, with slogans like: "equal opportunity" and laws to punish those who could be shown to have discriminated against a minority person based on his or her color, race, sex, etc. But the fact remained — each black job added caused a non-white job to be lost, creating an incipient backlash against these initiatives.

The pacifier, called affirmative action, turned the public's attention away from the root sources of their oppression, the economic system itself. It framed the question in terms of race, not of class. It continued to pit one grouping of workers against another. It focused on the individual, blaming individuals for being racist, challenging racist and sexist ideas in the individual, calling for individuals to change, while the system which fostered, manipulated and orchestrated oppressive policies through the use of racism, sexism, etc. (that is, individual prejudices) to achieve its own political aims, continued, unchanged and unchallenged. After the symptomatic relief of "equal opportunity" programs, consciousness raising through racism and sexism encounter groups, bussing and integration laws, and yes, affirmative action, "equal housing" lenders, "equal opportunity" employers had all been applied, the problem of racism remained. Both black and white workers became poorer, on a per capita basis, as industry disappeared and service work became the fastest growing arena of work in the United States.

Courtesy of Heher K. Lee

University of California Berkeley students protesting in November, 1996 against the "anti-affirmative action" state initiative, Proposition 209, being beaten by police. The UC Board of Regents adopted the proposition.

According to a study in 1992 by the Urban League, over the past 30 years, since government-sponsored "affirmative action" began, more than one out of every four black children goes to bed hungry each night. Nowhere in the "affirmative action" policy does it address a change in the racialist structure of the United States economic system — the built-in exploitation.

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COMMEMORATOR

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"SERVING ALL OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES"

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The New Welfare Reform Law: A Return to Slavery and Oppression in America

Photo by CCIR

Northern California Coalition For Immigrants Rights rally at state capitol in Sacramento protesting House Bill 1837.

A disorganized but persistent groundswell of outrage, criticism, and protest has arisen in the face of local governments mandated to put in the federal welfare "reform" law known as the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act" of 1996. Social workers who must deal directly with low-income communities and families most affected by the law have welcomed grassroots opposition voiced at public meetings with standing ovations.

Most of all, the law has been denounced as slave labor, providing yet another means to undercut workers who have jobs paying a decent wage by taking those jobs and forcing low-income workers to do the work for the welfare checks. Professionals, union members, employed, underemployed, and students are joining in a campaign to "end welfare as we know it with real jobs, not compulsory labor under state subsidy and supervision, and fabulous corporate profit."

Five Year Aid Limit

One component of the legislation passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton in August 1996 is a lifetime limit of five years that an adult single individual or head of the family can be on welfare. This means that even if the recipient could not find a job and the time limit is reached,

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Who Is There To Vote For?

©1997 by Mumia Abu-Jamal

The late, great and revered human rights activist, Malcolm X (el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz) once warned of the essential similarity between the American Democrat and his Southern "cuzzin," the Dixiecrat.

Malcolm explained that although one (the Democrat) acted like the friend of Black folks, and the other (the Dixiecrat) acted like a hated enemy, both really only cared about themselves, and the maintenance of white political supremacy and power.

"The chickens," as Malcolm predicted, "have come home to roost," for truly do we live in an age where Black folks can hardly tell friend from foe.

As political winds shift, so too do political alliances, and as politicians shovel to the lowest common denominator, the interests of Black so-called "citizens" get jettisoned as they curry to the frenzied fears and insecurities of white constituencies, who increasingly clamor against the perennial Black "other."

Black interests, like Black prospective Justice Department appointee professor Lani Gunier, get shuttled to the edges, and seen, in this new formula of political economy, as inherently "divisive," as if this nation has not, from its very inception, divided its African population from the very definition of human.

The election, and subsequent reelection of Bill "Bubba" Clinton has marked the re-ascension and political victory of an old strain of American politics. It is the Dixiecrat reborn, more sophisticated, with an almost urbane "crackerism."

This new Dixiecrat doesn't need to yell "Nigger," as did his daddy. He uses code words, and speaks in measured tones. He visits black churches where both politician and congregation can worship a white Jesus while the low-intensity warfare against black life rages on.

He can bomb babies (as Clinton did in Waco) or unleash his dogs of war on Third World countries while being serenaded by the latest black singer.

He can piss on the poor (as Clinton did with the Welfare Bill) while the new black middle class swears a tenuous allegiance to a class their parents never knew, and the wealthy class applauds his savage "discipline."

This new Dixiecrat is one who may be around blacks personally, yet espouses a neo-liberalism that attacks black collective interests.

Neo-liberalism is Dixiecrat with better manners.

It is the politics of white supremacy that may even utilize Black faces in high places, for it never forgets its pale roots.

Black folks, it is reported, voted in relatively smaller numbers in the last U.S. presidential election (in fact, of all eligible voters, less than 49% voted), a reflection not so much of Black apathy, as it is of Black cleverness, as in "what the hell is there to vote for?"

"What's the diff?"

One candidate all but snarled at Black voters, while the other all but ignored them.

Who is there to vote for?

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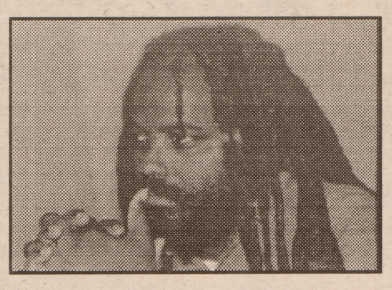

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Shabazz Dies

Continued from page 1

Courtesy of Marlene Krohn

Dr. Betty Shabazz

beginning in 1976 as Director of Communications and Public Relations and, more recently, as Director of Institutional Advancement.

One year after the assassination of Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense emerged, advancing the ideas of self-determination and self-defense which Malcolm X began to advocate shortly before he was murdered. In the early days of the Black Panther Party, Betty Shabazz supported the release from jail of Black Panther Party members who had been arrested on trumped-up charges.

The civil rights movement had reached a point of transition and transformation. A new generation of young black people, attempting to follow the teaching of Malcolm X, were rejecting reformism as the strategy for change, demanding a fundamental change in the economic system. This position took into consideration that racism was held in place by economics and the systemic nature of oppression in the United States, as well as in Africa and other parts of the world. Malcolm X was one of the first leaders to voice opposition to the United States policy of imperialist aggression in Southeast Asia. He explained and pointed out the relationship between the war in Vietnam and the oppression of black and other working people in the United States.

This was the position which Malcolm X had come to symbolize when he left the black nationalist religious group, the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X had embraced a more international political perspective, advocating a different approach, a different understanding.

Black Panther Party Stood as Honor Guard for Sister Betty

A few words from Dr. Huey P. Newton in Revolutionary Suicide, perhaps signify best what Dr. Shabazz represented to the Black Panther Party and movement.

"Early in February, 1967... groups banded together to sponsor a program in San Francisco honoring Malcolm X on the anniversary of his assassination. The guest of honor was to be Malcolm's widow, Sister Betty Shabazz. They wanted to arrange some security for her, since there was fear that she, too, might be assassinated. Bobby (Seale) and I attended a meeting to organize an escort... When details for the escort were worked out and the day arrived, we...headed for the airport to meet Sister Betty.

"Before leaving Oakland, I had told the comrades that we were not going to take any arrests on this trip. If anything happened, I said, we would fight right down to the last man, but we definitely would not give ourselves up to the police. We are going out there specifically to provide a bodyguard for Sister Betty, and unless they were willing to give up their lives, they ought not come.

"We made the decision for two reasons. First, she was the widow of Brother Malcolm X, our greatest leader and martyr, and the mother of his beautiful children. We would not allow anything to happen to her after the way the Establishment had so treacherously assassinated her husband. Second, her cousin, Hakim Jamal, had told me that when she visited Los Angeles, the police had run off Ron Karenga's group, which was providing an escort for her. They had left her standing alone in the middle of the street. My specific orders were that nobody was to be arrested because to be arrested was to leave her, and a violation of our main purpose.

"We proceeded to the airport. When her plane arrived, we formed a circle around her and led her to the waiting cars. People were standing around staring and wondering what was going on. The airport police were edgy and unhappy about our activity, but we knew what we were doing and we knew the law. We were taking care of Malcolm's widow."

Dr. Shabazz continued her tireless work to elevate the educational, social and cultural life of black and minority society. Her persistent struggle for the elimination of economic exploitation and racial discrimination remains a shining example for all who fight for true liberation.

Coretta Scott King, the widow of slain civil rights leader Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I will miss her greatly. She leaves a legacy of love, service, dedication and caring, especially for the children."

Over the past 32 years Dr. Shabazz endured many hardships in her struggle for a world of dignity and decency for all. She leaves six daughters: Attallah, Qubilah, Ilyasah, Gamilah, Malikah, and Malaak.

The Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party extends heartfelt support and sympathies to the entire Shabazz family.

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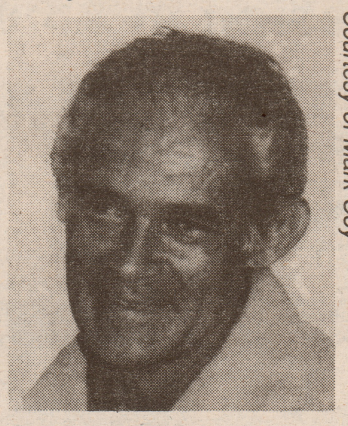
Obituary

In Memory of

Michael Norman Manley (December 10, 1924 — March 6, 1997)



Courtesy of Mark Coy

Michael Norman Manley, former socialist Prime Minister of Jamaica and advocate of economic, social and political equality and liberation for developing nations and oppressed people worldwide, died March 6, 1997, at his home near Kingston, Jamaica at the age of 72, succumbing to prostate cancer.

Michael Manley was the son of People's National Party founder and Jamaican Prime Minister, Norman Washington Manley, who led Jamaica to independence from British rule in 1962.

The younger Manley, a trade union leader and journalist, became president of the People's National Party in 1969 upon his father's death. In 1972, he won a resounding electoral victory and assumed the seat of Jamaican Prime Minister.

Manley, although of mixed racial background, became a leading force in the "Black Power" movement that swept the Caribbean in the 1970's, with the Rastafarians in Jamaica elevating him to quasi-religious status through his possession of a staff ("the Rod of Joshua") given to him by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. Manley was an important spokesman in the United Nations for redistribution of the world's wealth and resources in favor of developing nations, and against imperialist exploitation and economic deprivation of the poor nations, calling for capitalism to be demolished "brick by brick." He fostered close ties between his nation and Cuba, and Cuba sent medical professionals, teachers and other technical workers to assist Jamaica.

As Prime Minister, Manley tried to destroy the stark economic inequalities of Jamaica through programs which promoted better health care, education, job training, and agricultural self-sufficiency, fighting bravely against imperialism by exercising increased national control over the vast bauxite mines exploited primarily by United States and Canadian-based monopolies. Manley cut ties with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1980. These actions ultimately led to Manley's defeat by U.S.-supported, right-wing Edward Seaga in 1980, in an

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In Memory of

Queen Mother Moore (July 27, 1898 — May 2, 1997)

The black liberation struggle lost a formidable warrior when Queen Mother Moore passed on May 2, 1997.

Queen Mother Moore was born Audley Moore on July 27, 1898 in New Iberia, Louisiana. Racial violence in the south had a profound effect on her consciousness at a young age. Her parents died when she was in the 4th grade and by age 14 Queen Mother became the primary supporter of her two younger sisters, Eloise and Lorita. During the 1918 influenza epidemic she worked as a volunteer nurse. During World War I she and her two sisters traveled to Anniston, Alabama to help create what she called "the first United Servicemen Organization (USO) for Black soldiers" which provided medical care, food and other services for soldiers who were denied assistance by the Red Cross. She considered this her first act of political organizing. Shortly thereafter she returned to New Orleans and joined the Universal Negro Improvement Association, inspired by a speech by Marcus Garvey and by the collective unity of those in the audience who demonstrated for Garvey's right to speak when police tried to stop him.

Queen Mother migrated with her husband and her two sisters to Harlem in the early 1920s. She organized domestic workers in the Bronx labor market and helped Black tenants in their struggles against white landlords. She was arrested repeatedly for her activities, but could not be stopped in her activism. She later told an interviewer "there wasn't nothing to do but struggle."

In 1931, she participated in the Communist Party's march in Harlem to free the Scottsboro boys, who received a rape conviction based on the testimony of two white women of uncertain reputation,

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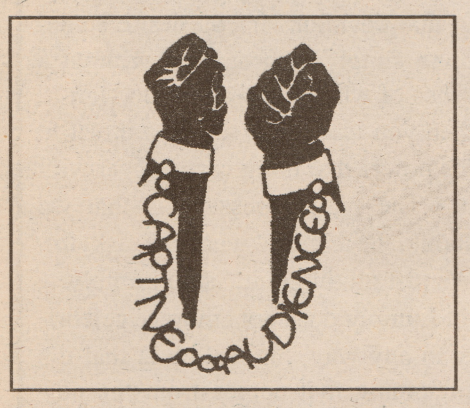
Captive Audience

Class Unity in the Community



By John Donner

Class struggle, not race war, is the correct solution for America's oppressed. Green is the only color that really counts, especially when you face being homeless, hungry or sick and need shelter, food, health-care or other matters of life and death. Our common class oppressor has put the race and ethnic cards out there to destroy oppressed-class unity along racial and ethnic lines, so the oppressed can be divided and conquered in smaller, more manageable, isolated racial and ethnic groups. For blacks to fight poor Asians, Jews, Latinos and whites over the biggest crumb from the table is political-economic suicide; it can only serve to isolate the poor black community already in a position dangerously similar to European scapegoated Jews under Hitler's Third Reich. The race and ethnic card trick is to pit one poor group or minority against another in a fight for a bigger piece of the pie when the point is the common class oppressor and who controls the whole pie.

As El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X) and Dr. Huey P. Newton taught us, institutional exploitation based on race and ethnic origin are forms of class-based oppression and cannot be eliminated without first eliminating international monopoly capitalism, the dominant form of class-based oppression. Brother Malcolm likened this form of class-based oppression to a "vulture." Those two leaders paid with their lives; they were attacked and murdered in retaliation for their belief in, and efforts to organize around, the correct principle of class struggle.

Brother Malcolm stated at the Militant Labor Forum on May 29, 1964, that racism and capitalism are inseparable, that is that institutional exploitation based on race cannot be successfully attacked and eliminated without first attacking and eliminating international monopoly capital. In 1965 Brother Malcolm explained his reasons for dropping "Black Nationalism" in favor of the broader and correct unifying principle of international class struggle. Brother Malcolm's remarks to this effect were printed in the March-April 1965 issue of the Young Socialist.

Dr. Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party chose class struggle under the banner of "Revolutionary Intercommunalism," as set forth in Brother Huey's 1970 Boston College lecture and documents, supporting international class struggle instead of division along racial lines, leading to suicidal, genocidal race war.

It is not strange or surprising that the correct principles of class struggle find support even within the inner circle of elite Afrocentric scholars. Leonard Jeffries Jr., for example, in his review of the late Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop's Civilization and Barbarism published in Great African Thinkers: The Legacy of Cheikh Anta Diop (Ivan Van Sertima ed. 1992), observes that the domination of the conquered on an ethnic basis and exploitation of man by man within an ethnic framework, historically, takes place within the context of class struggle, with social class status linked to the dominant group.

Jeffries, in his review of Dr. Diop's classic work, makes it clear that the late Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop's conclusions implicitly supported the correctness of class analysis, class struggle and historical materialism, but thought these factors became controlling once a society consisted of only one ethnic group as a result of violence. Diop's conclusions, stand for two important points. In a society where oppression cannot be based on race or ethnic

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Melvin,

Our constituency here is hungry for the paper. I had to call on my diplomatic skills to diffuse a possible altercation because one constituent felt that another constituent jumped ahead of him on the list of people to whom the paper was scheduled to be passed from hand to hand.

Even that 15-35 year old grouping who the Kerner Commission stated were most likely to participate in civil disorder and accounted for 81 percent of those arrested for civil disobedience during the sizzling nine months of 1967 which registered 164 disturbances in 128 cities; respond almost 100 percent to wanting the paper. This is a part of the same grouping being wooed by ethno-centric, theo-centric, black nationalism under the banner of black capitalism and race struggle as negation of class struggle global in scope.

Hence the building of the apparatus that must operate to expand production and circulation of the paper as a thing for program based on correct analysis, line and methodology is of dire necessity.

It has been pointed out that the erasure of the history and culture of struggle of an oppressed class is one of the fundamental military disarmament tactics a colonized people are subjected to. I see the effects of this erasure every day not only in the statistics that place the 15-35 year old prime gang banger population first in the categories of most likely to be both murdered and executed for murder, both victimized by violent crime and imprisoned for violent crime (and the list goes on.)

The symbol and history that the paper conveys seems to be one thing that has universally survived the adversary attempts at erasure, and groupings that we absolutely must organize it as foundation in what has to be done, by whom, how and why. Otherwise race war will be bought by our constituents as the only viable option and those who ride the necks of the oppressed offering nationalism, religion, and capitalism will continue to exhaust the potential of the vexed, tormented and anguished we saw patterns and shadows of in L.A. in 1992.

John

A brother inside

P.S. Keep up the good work. It is very powerful.

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ARTIST CORNER

Photo by William H. Jones Jr.

Carl Lumbly, stage and film actor.

by William H. Jones, Jr.

Carl Lumbly, a celebrated African-American actor, volunteered his considerable talent and services at Oakland's Black History Month celebration on Sunday, February 23rd at North Oakland Missionary Baptist Church.

An African-American actor of Jamaican descent, Lumbly has performed in films and television. His love of words and communication, and the need to articulate important issues in society through the characters he plays are his prime motives.

Lumbly stars in the title role of the film "Nightjohn," shown at the Black History Month Program. He played the role of an African-American slave in the American South in the 1830's who escaped from slavery, but returned to risk his life in the struggle to teach other slaves to read and write as an avenue to liberation. This film portrays racial discrimination and prejudice at its most brutal time during the volatile pre-Civil War plantation system of United States southern labor history.

Carl Lumbly was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Despite having moved his family to the United States many years ago, his father vowed that wherever they resided, he would rear his children with his native Jamaican values. His father was determined to raise Jamaican children. Carl had to find his Americaness in the community. "He raised me to be concerned, to operate at the top of my intelligence," Lumbly explained.

Lumbly prefers to act in roles whose characters demonstrate the power that creative unity in the African community can bring, as well as reactions of a Eurocentric culture to that display of power. "I am always looking for the opportunity to counteract the weight of negative or appropriate images." He admits this is often difficult to accomplish in the current economic/political environment in which there are fewer forums available to meet and discuss issues with a group of like minds.

Mr. Lumbly takes his work very seriously, but tries not to take himself too seriously. He says he was motivated to become an actor by "the notion of being able to say what was on my mind," adding, "I enjoy the kind of work that I have to do with myself to do justice to the characters.

"The sort of personal work that you have to do to really examine such things as personal integrity, whether you believe the character is lying or telling the truth. I don't think you can act them unless you can go to those places in yourself. Acting requires a sense of human surgery to really do justice to portraying humankind."

He currently has the title role in the Berkeley Repertory Theater's production in Shakespeare's MacBeth; the story of a medieval Scottish king's quest for the possession of privilege and power, and the consequences that lead to his fall from power and demise. "Kingship has a power regardless of whoever is in that position. If you desire something simply to possess it without a sense of what you want to do with it, then you leave yourself as a threat to the power that thing carries over with it. The play's message is that we should be careful what we ask for. We just might get it," said Lumbly.

Lumbly does not embrace celebrity in any way; his feeling is that it's something that comes from the outside. "There are certain notions about what famous people are supposed to be like, what they are supposed to do and not do. You can embrace them or leave them be. I choose to leave them be."

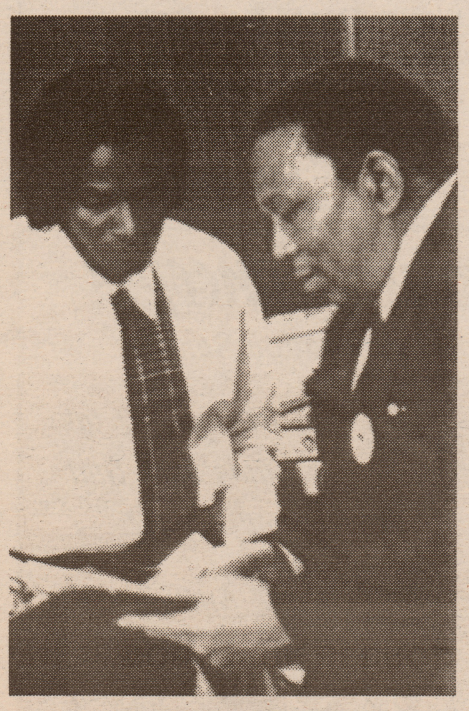
Carl has hopes that artists will begin to organize to fight problems and inequities within the industry as well as in the greater society, because of the power artists will gain and utilize. "I think that in every generation there are very strong voices, but unless you know what you are going to cry about, it might not do you any good."

Black History Month Labor College

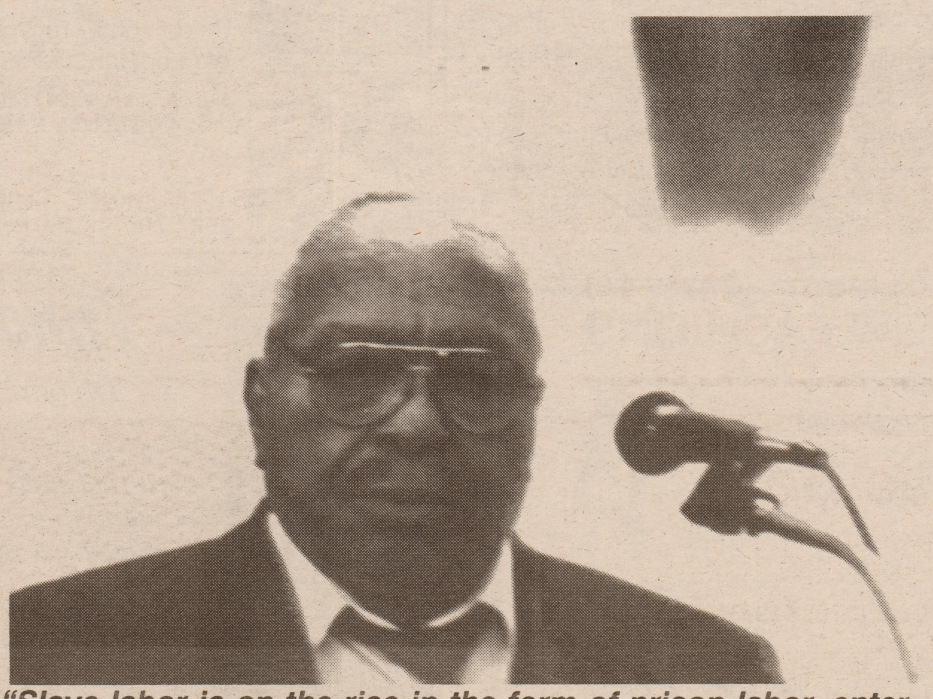
Winfield Baggett (left) lead Labor College organizer, shares food and conversation at the Black History Month celebration.

Reverend Sylvester Rutledge, (right) Pastor of the North Oakland Missionary Baptist Church, where this event was held, leads the choir at Labor College singing gospel.

Children view the movie, "Nightjohn," starring Carl Lumbly as a slave who risks his life to teach southern slaves to read.



Actor Carl Lumbly (left) confers with Commemorator Editor, Melvin Dickson.



"Slave labor is on the rise in the form of prison labor, enterprise zones and workfare," Winfield Baggett, organizer of The Black History Month Labor College, told the audience, followed by a powerful recounting of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry.

Close to 100 people joined together to celebrate Black History Month at The Bay Area Community Labor College, an educational endeavor founded in 1979 by a number of independent community organizing efforts with the realization that understanding our history is essential to improving our conditions. The story of the struggle of African-American workers was told by Winfield Baggett and others, as a call to action to organize across the barriers that have kept American labor divided and to make the black struggle labor's struggle.

ALL POWER
TO THE PEOPLE

Photos by Charles Slay
David LaTrobe
William H. Jones

ARCHIVES

Huey's Corner

A True Vehicle For Change

Editor note: The following archival piece is based on a transcript from an interview with Dr. Huey P. Newton, chief theoretician of the Black Panther Party conducted in 1977 by Herman Blake, a University of California Santa Cruz sociology professor. What was not known at the time of the interview was that Herman Blake was an undercover police agent. It is not uncommon for the police to position agents who have college degrees in university settings as staff, placing them in departments such as Sociology and Political Science, where they can be among student discussions on social change and identify individual students and university staff who demonstrate particular ability to organize, theorize, and mobilize others toward practical application of theories for change.

Herman Blake was one of those people. That police tactic continues today.

The excerpt chosen here represents Huey speaking on the question of racism and laying out the political and practical program that the BPP offered poor black and oppressed communities, long before the oppressive system itself offered the community "affirmative action" reform instead of change; pacification instead of power.

Shortly after 1966, in October, our Party dropped "self-defense" from the name because everybody had accepted this, but the self-defense tactic had not ended our oppression. So we said that we have to have sterner stuff, we have to have a greater kind of movement that could cover a larger area. We started to be called the Black Panther Party.

The BPP was a political party that not only covered self-defense, which was the seventh point on our political program, far down from one — you would note we addressed housing and employment before that. We started to organize groups, political groups, to do what blacks had never done, that is to form a political vehicle broad enough in scope and enlightened enough to see that the oppression does not only mean the vicious police service revolver, it also meant the malnutrition of our children that would distort their brain in such a way that they could not even figure out a way to liberate their children, but we had to first emphasize the thing we could involve blacks around.

BPP had an historical view of why blacks had not organized a basic political vehicle or unit, that most white ethnic groups organized, as a step toward becoming integrated into white America, then using that vehicle to perpetuate the racism and the reaction in this country. They could have very easily used the vehicle to oppose it.

First I want to explain why blacks did not use this. The historical difference starts with the fact that most of the immigrants that came to this country, the ethnic groups, maintained the most basic political unit, and that is the family unit. If you destroy that basic unit, then you destroy the basic ingredient for any organization, politically speaking. Blacks did not come here as immigrants, they came here in chains, as slaves and their families were ripped apart and black history was damaged to the point where we could not readily draw upon the continuity of our history. The unity that is basic to the family was destroyed and, therefore, our whole political organization was retarded.

The BPP program saw the need to create this vehicle. We saw the difference between a movement and a political organization. A movement is a mass group of people moving perhaps toward one goal; a political vehicle, or an administrative guiding body, is what guides the energy of this mass group. The mass group realizes and feels very strongly about their freedom, in this case, but they don't claim to be social theoreticians or politicians so they move rather blindly and usually they end up relying upon someone who claims some sort of understanding of the total situation to guide them because of a lack of a social vehicle of our own, a political kind of machine, as we call it. Many times in history we have had a social movement, but not a social organization. Not until the Black Muslims did we have a social vehicle. This vehicle then provides some other things. A vehicle is a machine. A machine is more than just a printing press, which is a necessary thing for communication in this day and age (as well as radio, television and other means of communication). A machine is our first tool. It's a tool to not only organize, but to administrate. This

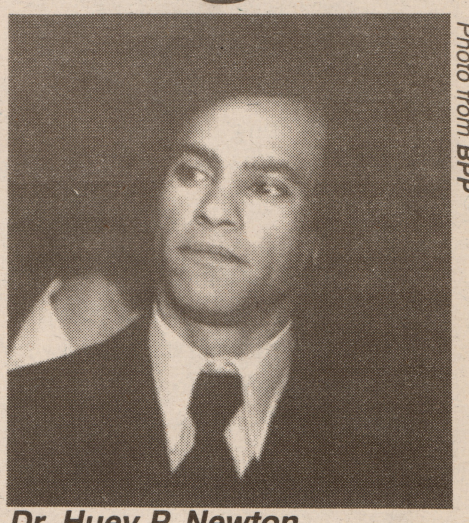


Photo from BPP

Dr. Huey P. Newton

machine has to be guided by a concept or idea, and the concept upon which it relies will determine whether the vehicle will become reactionary or revolutionary.

A vehicle itself is empty without energy. The people act as the energy.

So, because "blacks" did not form a political unit as the Irish and even the Italians did, you know the Italian organization started out as a liberation group in Sicily. They called it a liberation group there; in this country they call it the Mafia. The Mafia started with the idea of ousting the French out of Italy, out of Sicily. They got mixed up somehow in their revolutionary concept, their guiding thought and their vehicle became reactionary in this country. They still have the vehicle, but the vehicle is now used to support the capitalist exploiter. What they call the Mafia in

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International Update

CONGO LIBERATION

Worldwide News Service

The Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire took control of one of the largest countries in Africa to international popular acclaim after seven months of fighting and are the envy of American and European military officers trying to understand how it was accomplished.

The newly renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo was declared 17 May by President Laurent Kabila, who led the revolutionary forces' lightning victory after 35 years of persistent attempts. It has the world's third largest diamond reserves, after South Africa and the former Soviet Union, and large reserves of copper and cobalt among other minerals. Its people suffer one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world, after 100 years of exploitation by the King of Belgium (who ruled it as his personal estate), and thirty years under U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) trained and paid dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

Mobutu assassinated the first premier of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, in 1960 shortly after the country became independent of Belgium. Both Belgian political police and the CIA considered Lumumba, a fiery orator, "dangerous" and "pro-communist" because he served as President of the Association of Indigenous Workers of the Colony, and later led the Congolese National Movement.

According to U.S. Senate intelligence reports made public in 1975, two CIA officers with known criminal backgrounds were authorized by CIA Director Allen Dulles to poison Lumumba, because he advocated using the wealth of the country to benefit Africans, but Mobutu killed him first.

Liberation forces were warmly welcomed throughout their march across Zaire by people who had given up hope of ever seeing any improvement in their lives. Kabila served under Lumumba and later fought alongside Che Guevara in an attempt to restore the lawful government of the Congo in 1965. He has been fighting Mobutu for nearly 35 years.

Courtesy of Bob Drogin

In Kinshasa, the last major city to fall to the revolution in Congo/Zaire, people rejoiced with Mobutu's defeat.

Although western diplomats, scrambling to gain some sort of influence over the surprising transformation of the country, have demanded immediate elections, the new government has asked that everyone "...be patient. First the people must be awakened politically."

American Ambassador Richardson has warned that wealthy industrial nations "hold the key" to resources the newly liberated republic will need to develop economically, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. However, with mining companies lining up to pay for concessions, it is not clear that the new government will need to bow to either institution, which have imposed harsh "austerity" measures on most other countries in Africa and Latin America. One mining company put down a $50 million payment when the liberation forces held only half the country, expressing the relief that the new government—not yet in power—handled the transaction without bribery and corruption.

Interview with Nozipo Bam Glenn of the Pan Africanist Congress

Editor note: This is the second part of an interview held with Nozipo Bam Glenn (NBG), in April '96, by The Commemorator *Editor, Melvin Dickson (MD) and* The Commemorator *Managing Editor, Gary Johnson (GJ). (see February 1997 issue)*

Nozipo Bam Glenn, middle U.S. rep for the Pan Africanist Congress, a graduate of Fort Hare University, Cape Town, South Africa, was an exile from her country's white apartheid government in 1972 and passionate about self-determination in her country. While living in Nashville, she attended Fisk University. She is now writing a book and speaks publicly in the Mid-West and Europe. She lives in Dayton, Ohio.

MD: What about the trade unions?

NBG: The trade unions are having a hard time lately because Mandela is clamping on them. Yes, he's clamping on them. Initially when they would come out to organize the workers unions, he would say, "don't drop the boat, just be patient, just cool it. This is not an apartheid regime, just be cool." But after a while they started saying, "Wait a minute, we've been cool for too long. What's going on?" So now, yes, he does clamp on them, he does send the strong arm police to go in and quell some strikes. Last year, the police union went on strike, and they were beat up. They send in other police to literally kick them and he's having a problem now, because COSATO was a strong union that really supported the ANC all the way, they even had members in Parliament.

GJ: I spoke to Cyril [Ramaphosa] when he was here.

NBG: Well see, Cyril, they kind of quieted him out and gave him that job to go and write the constitution, that's one way to keep him so focused and so busy on that that he have no time for the unions anymore. That's the thing, these pacifiers. You got these big tall men walking around with pacifiers.

GJ: Does PAC work with labor unions?

NBG: Yes we work with labor unions.

GJ: I mean do you see labor unions as a force?

NBG: Absolutely. Absolutely. We have to work the land. We have to be organized. PAC right now is getting ready to have a meeting to try and restructure. We kind of lost our balance, with all this madness. So we trying to restructure and get a younger leadership. Fresh leadership.

MD: What about Coalition of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)?

NBG: COSATU the union; it still there; they're still strong. Actually there's a lot of strikes going on, right now. One thing: the same thing that DeKlerk regime was doing, squashing the media, not letting things out. It's still happening. Because there's a lot of things that are happening that you won't hear about. The nurses go on strike. Several hospital go on strike. Taxis drivers go on strike. All kinds of people have gone on strike. Miners, teachers; and you don't hear about it.

MD: What about the ANC, I guess they are not as active as they were, before Mandela became...

NBG: Right!

MD: Unions over there were in solidarity with ANC.

NBG: Right, especially COSATU.

MD: How's the PAC working along the line with the unions?

NBG: One of the things that we're concentrating on right now is the "squatter" situation. The homeless. They always change names, and use euphemisms, and you get lost, but basically it's the homeless people. In their own land — ten million homeless Africans. The PAC is concentrating on working with the homeless right now. We are building branches in the squatter camps, especially our vice president, Dr. Pheko Motsoko. He's going around building branches in the squatter camps themselves. So, instead of the PAC coming in and saying this is what you do, and leaving, they are having them form their

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Shell Game

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Affirmative action was meant to cover up the fact that, at one of the most prosperous times in American history, not everyone who needed and wanted a job, an education, a house, could get one. Ending affirmative action signifies the end of the bribe to minority families. Now, with the greatest concentration of wealth in the fewest hands in American history, the same people who invented affirmative action as a means of quelling social unrest can no longer afford to offer even the best and the brightest of the minority races a small piece of the "American Dream."

With a college degree, your future is no longer a $50,000 a year job. Instead you face a future as a temporary worker, independent contractor or service worker with no benefits, low wages and no protection under the United States labor law.

Affirmative action sounds good. Equality sounds good, but it has to include liberty and justice for all; otherwise it's a ruse. The policy's results do not measure up to its terminology: "affirmative action." We are talking about United States government-sponsored "affirmative action," something totally different from liberty, equality and justice for all, which are in theory and practice very "affirmative" in action.

Nowhere did the federal authors of government-sponsored "affirmative action" call for living wages and jobs for all. That call came not from Washington, D.C., but from North Oakland from Huey P. Newton and the BPP's Survival Programs (point number Two of the Ten-Point Program).

Photo from Black Community News Service

After generations of government neglect, in the early 1970s the Black Panther Party organized a campaign against sickle cell anemia, a deadly disease that predominantly affects black people.

All Power to the People Means High Stakes; Government "Affirmative Action" Does Not Represent Real Change

Thirty years ago the BPP called for all power to the people, uniting and organizing their communities through survival programs that addressed day-to-day needs, such as food, clothing, health care and many other programs, while at the same time building a political vehicle that demanded the Ten-Point Program and fundamental change in the system.

Government-sponsored "affirmative action," on the other hand, has a narrow racial and sexual premise, blaming the status of women, blacks and other minorities on sexist or racist individuals — scapegoating individuals for the oppression of the blacks and minorities and posing individual solutions, choosing to ignore the historic and systemic nature of the problem.

As the Party sought to identify and resolve the problem of the failing economic and political status of minorities at its systemic (root) level, the U.S. government sought to turn eyes away from itself and its system of governing as the cause; to divert the people's attention to blame the individual (the symptom). It prosecuted those who discriminated against minorities while the system that fosters this discrimination at the economic level went unchanged. That is why we are right back where we started with racial equality and racial discrimination. Affirmative action provided only symptomatic relief. Its effects have worn off, and the symptoms are worse than ever.

Government-sponsored "affirmative action" presented black communities with poverty programs with all kinds of strings, limitations, and poverty pimps attached. The poverty programs of symptomatic relief and deflection from the true source of the problems of poverty were maintained as long as independent, militant, community-based organization, such as the BPP, continued to call for attention to the root cause and demand fundamental change at the source, despite attack and sabotage by the government.

Affirmative Action and Civil Rights

The BPP, through its policy of grass roots organizing and education, began enlightening not only the Black community, but oppressed communities of all sorts to the truth of the matter: that all workers are victims of these divide and conquer tactics, and that by pooling their resources, they could truly effect the kinds of fundamental changes called for by the Ten-Point Program.

The affirmative action requirement was introduced in the civil rights legislation of the 1960s to remedy the lingering effects of past discrimination by requiring positive action by municipalities, states, the federal government, universities and colleges, private employers, banks and lending institutions. Affirmative action took the form of quotas in hiring — increasing the number of black students in a college or black workers in a business to reflect the percentage numbers in the population — often with government loans and tax write-offs to sweeten the proposition.

The whole phenomenon can be traced back to a turning-point in American history. In 1954, the new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, Earl Warren, made a decision in Brown v. Board of Education which overturned what had been settled law since 1896 in a case called Plessy v. Ferguson. The decision in Plessy had approved a doctrine known as "separate but equal." It accepted with a sense of abstract justice the reasoning which lay behind what came to be know as "Jim Crow" — segregation. Nowhere was this segregation as pronounced as in the workforce.

Brown v. Board of Education said that "separate" was hardly, if ever, "equal." The court stated what everyone knew already, that if whites and blacks were kept separate and whites, as a group, traditionally had the benefits of the slave holding society — the money, the property, the positions, governmental authority, and opportunities for education, jobs and advancement, that the two could never be equal in any meaningful way. The Warren Court not only rejected the rationale, however, but also ordered them to do something very specific about it. It ordered black children to be bussed to white schools, and vice versa, to desegregate them in the ostensible hope that if white children were forced to go to the former black schools their parents would be forced to appropriate the funds those schools needed to provide a decent education, and the black students who benefited from the higher quality of the white schools would, perhaps, begin to break into the arenas previously denied them not only because of their race, but because of their inferior education.

The more affluent whites who could afford to and wanted to get away from this moved to the suburbs or paid for parochial or other private schools, and no advance was achieved. A new kind of separation resulted.

The "civil rights" movement in the south called for equal rights and desegregation. But others demanded more — economic change. Instead the government passed the Voting Rights Act, the Open Housing Act, and job discrimination legislation. While eight thousand African-Americans obtained elective office, the vast majority remained economically as bad off in 1994 as in 1964.

Researchers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education found that from 1991 to 1994, as the Federal courts made it easier for school districts to abandon desegregation plans, the percentage of minority students in schools with a substantial white enrollment fell appreciably, according to Peter Applebourne (NY Times, 4/8/97).

Combined with the increasing segregation of Hispanic students, who are now more likely than black students to be isolated in schools which are largely minority and poor, the report portrays a nation in which the 'the separate but equal' education outlawed by the Supreme Court in 1954 is alive and isolation increasing.

The BPP and Revolutionary Organizations

Dr. Huey P. Newton stated it quite clearly, "Across the country there have been coalitions of Black people and caucuses, but these have not served the people as political vehicles. They have merely served as bourgeois structures to get Black candidates into political offices. Once elected, the machinery used to thrust these people into office simply passed out of existence or became ineffective insofar as serving the true interests of the Black oppressed people," (Huey P. Newton's To Die For the People, pp. 55 and 56).

Faced with an atmosphere of extremely vocal, highly organized groups, such as the BPP, calling for immediate and fundamental change, affirmative action represented the government's reaction to the comprehensive, coherent plans for inclusion and redistribution called for by the vanguard for change, the BPP.

Continued in next issue

Reform is Slavery

Continued from page 3

welfare is over for that family — men, women, and children. States have the option to limit it down to two years.

The former federal welfare policy requires the states to provide assistance to all those eligible. Those requirements will be replaced by federal block grants given to the states which are set amounts. Eligibility requirements are left to the states' discretion with no guarantee of assistance to anyone. Each state will get a fixed sum of federal money each year, even if a recession or local calamity causes a state to run out of federal funds before the year ends. When the money is gone, it's gone, and under new rules the state has no obligation or responsibility to care for the needy once the money is gone. They can simply lock the gate and turn people away "by any means necessary."

The "workfare" provision of the federal welfare reform law requires able-bodied welfare recipients to work in order to continue to receive assistance of income equivalent to less than what was received in the form of a welfare check, food stamps, and Medicaid.

Program advocates like Governor Pete Wilson of California and George Pataki of New York say workfare is good because it forces welfare recipients to go out and get work experience and job skills, while the low-wage (tax-payer subsidized) will give businesses the incentive to take them on.

Labor leaders and community organizers call this a facade behind which the federal government is creating a massive cheap-labor pool that has been used, is being used, and will be used to further tear down union scale wages and organized labor where it is still organized, by lowering wages for all workers and replacing full-time employees with welfare workers.

In New York City, the Work Experience Program (WEP) has placed about 100,000 welfare recipients in various formerly unionized municipal jobs. The workfare-welfare recipients who work without sick leave, vacations, benefits, and pensions receive $544 a month.

"There are Really No Job Opportunities"

The program has proved disastrous for unionized workers who have lost 20,000 good paying jobs to the program, finding themselves in workfare programs performing their jobs at less than half the wages without any benefits. Meanwhile, WEP has been a jackpot for the city government, which hires workers at a fraction of the cost—for just $1.80 per hour, due to the government's matching payment of welfare costs.

In Cocoa, Florida, with a population of 18,000, Clarence Row, president of the local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and volunteer member of the Brevard County Workfare Development Board told the Commemorator, "Welfare reform is an insult." Cocoa is located south of Dayton and east of Orlando in central Florida.

"I don't mind them getting rid of welfare, but they have to have a long range plan. There are really no job opportunities: the jobs have gone to foreign countries. The black churches used to keep the black community informed. Today, they aren't doing that. I think they are afraid to take a stand. They don't want to upset anything."

Biloxi, Mississippi Resolution

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) 20th annual conference in December in Biloxi, Mississippi, adopted a resolution regarding the 1996 welfare reform law which states, according to Miss Diane Bush, a head administrator of the NBCSL welfare division, "The state has a compelling interest in preserving the health and safety of families," and, "must also ensure that other individuals in the public, private, and community based organizations are not displaced by efforts to implement the provisions of the act." In other words, workers who have living wage jobs with benefits should not lose their jobs in the "welfare to workfare" process.

Honesty to Fight

Kevin Whitinghill, benefit coordinator for Western Service Workers Association in Santa Cruz, California, speaking against the implementation of the federal welfare reform bill in Sunnyvale in November, 1996, stated, "This has to stop somewhere, and it better be soon, because we can't afford it. Those of you in state and county offices who know that it cannot be made to work without killing people, why do you not have the courage, fortitude, and honesty to fight it, and fight for what we really need as a solution? Why do you rush this through when you know its consequences are disastrous?"

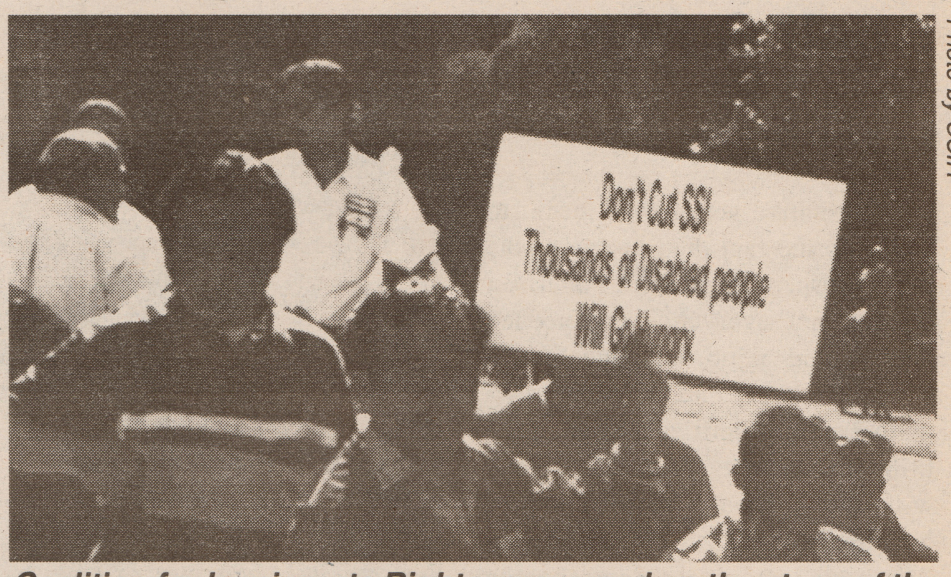

Photo by CCIR

Coalition for Immigrants Rights converged on the steps of the California state capitol to protest the new federal welfare bill that will cause many immigrants to lose benefits, such as Medicaid, disability, etc.

Renee Blair, in San Diego, a volunteer with Welfare Warriors, a news tabloid based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, published by welfare mothers, said, "There will be hungry social workers whose sad choice it will be to make profit off the defenseless—or be out of a job and eaten alive themselves."

"The biggest problem that welfare recipients face is finding a job. The program does not take into account the reality of how many jobs the economy is producing," said Assemblywoman Dion Aroner, D-Berkeley, California, nor are the costs of child care, transportation, or time it takes to search for jobs that don't exist taken into account.

According to Palvir Shoker, Commemorator correspondent in Sacramento, California, who researched the bill, "The welfare recipient is worse off by working because with a low-wage job, the take-home pay is reduced by the out-of-pocket costs of commuting, day care and health coverage. They are left with much less than they receive by getting the cash aid."

She pointed out, for example, that the state of California generates a total of 650,000 new jobs in a good year; there are 900,000 adults on the welfare rolls. So just cutting people off from welfare is not going to help them rise above poverty, she concludes. The statistics show otherwise.

According to a study done by Urban Institute, the bill would move 2.6 million people, including 1.1 million children, into poverty. A total of 11 million families (10% of all American families) would lose their income. This includes more than 8 million families with children, which would lose an average of about $1,300 per family.

At least 25,000 poor and low-income families, including children, have been punished "with loss of support" because workfare overseers decided that they had "not cooperated." According to the state's own figures, 63% were in fact removed from government assistance in error. Wisconsin has also scratched its state "Health and Social Services" moniker, replacing it with Department of Workforce Development.

"Work Makes You Free" — "Arbeit Macht Frei"

California Governor Pete Wilson launched his version of welfare reform by stereotyping unemployed workers surviving on assistance checks, calling on the state government to "recast our very culture...so that taxpayers no longer subsidize idleness or promiscuity...and no longer suffer when illegitimacy hatches into social pathology." Many listeners were reminded of Nazi propaganda comparing Jews to rats, and southern references to people of African descent as pets.

As Wilson advanced from "any legal job is better than subsidized idleness," to offering contracts for private companies such as Electronic Data Systems to run portions of welfare at a profit, the entire program started to sound like the slogan in wrought iron over the gates of German concentration camps—"Arbeit Macht Frei"—which roughly translated means "Labor liberates." Like welfare reform, concentration camps were attached to factories, providing a free forced labor pool that made factory owners like I.G. Farben, Krupp and Bayer extremely wealthy.

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Captive Audience

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make-up because there is only one ethnic group, class oppression continues in force, and is subject to the laws of historical materialism. Moreover, the race and ethnic issues mask, disguise and conceal the true class natuare of the oppression and exploitation which exists between the oppressor class and the oppressed class. Jeffries' and Diop's conclusions and observations are consistent with Brother Huey's and Brother Malcolm's view that there is no end to the oppression of those under the iron heel of the conqueror until there is an end to its economic root.

Brother Malcolm X and Dr. Huey P. Newton made it indisputably clear that institutionalized exploitation based on ethnic origin and race could not be eliminated without first eliminating its economic motor, because the two were inseparable. Reactionaries, claiming to be Afrocentric scholars, have put forth a false, dangerous and deceptive argument against participation of oppressed blacks in an international class struggle against monopoly capitalism. These same reactionaries pay lip service to Brother Malcolm while attacking the principle of solidarity he stood for at the end of his life. Contrary to Malcolm X and Dr. Huey P. Newton's beliefs and practice, these reactionaries, masquerading as Afrocentric scholars, support, instead, conflict among and between different racial and ethnic groups.

Their dangerous and deceptive argument begins with allegations that "puppet" black Marxists, trained by the "white left" are incorrectly leading the oppressed black masses into a unified international class struggle, against international monopoly capitalism, beside the oppressed masses of all colors, when oppressed black people should not be attacking the system of international monopoly capitalism but should be attacking white people irrespective of class. This position is indeed unfortunate because it serves the common class oppressor's interests by destroying oppressed class unity. The reactionaries further claim that, since racism existed before capitalism developed, capitalism could not have created racism. These reactionaries conclude that oppressed blacks should not join oppressed whites in attacking international monopoly capitalism but should attack white people, as a category.

This reactionary argument, in addition to serving ruling class interest, further focuses attention and the point of attack away from the economic nature of the problem as a system which oppresses all those at the bottom, the world over. Attacking white people as white people, instead of the international monopoly capitalist system the world over, would also leave non-white oppressive capitalist regimes free to continue to oppress those members of their own racial and ethnic groups at the bottom. We see this every day in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

A System of Class-based Oppression

The claim that institutionalized exploitation based on race and ethnic origin existed before the development of international monopoly capitalism does not erase the fact that exploitation was a major foundation for the capitalist system itself, which is merely the most recently evolved yet dominant form of class-based oppression. Moreover, institutionalized exploitation based on race and ethnic origin has never existed in history unless it was part of a system of class-based oppression, such as slavery or international monopoly capitalism. Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop dates institutionalized exploitation based on race as beginning around 525 B.C., with the post-Alexandrian, Greco-Roman implementation of residential racial segregation laws in ancient Egypt, according to Runoko Rashidi. Dr. Diop explained that racially-based exploitation of blacks would have been impossible, on a large scale, prior to 750 B.C., because blacks monopolized all the institutions necessary for this before that date; ie., technology, industry, education, religion and others.

The year 750 B.C. coincides with the consolidation of the Aryan (as in Hitler's Aryan master race and the Aryan Brotherhood) conquest of Northwest India (Pakistan) and the entire Gangetic plain of India east to the river Jamuna. Aryans encountered an already existing class-based caste system when they arrived. Dr. Diop states that caste (a form of class-based society) was an indigenous African institution. The institution of slavery, which is a form of class-based oppression, existed in Europe, Asia and Africa prior to the Aryan conquest of (Pakistan). The black Shang dynasty of China had slavery as early as 1700 B.C.

When the Aryans arrived, they injected religious racism into the Hindu caste system in order to establish themselves as the ruling upper class, upper caste, or varna. As early as the Reg Veda (Hindu scripture) we see the development of a class-based, caste system, which used religious racism to assign upper caste status based on skin color and race. Four varnas (a Sanskrit word for complexion) were fashioned through religious racism, with the Aryan occupying the first three varna, Brahmin, Ksatriya and Vaisya. The black Sudra made up the fourth varna, with the untouchables falling outside of the fourth varna, a de facto fifth varna. The Hindu scripture, the Reg Veda, claimed that the Sudra varna (now assigned black or dark skin complexion) sprang from the feet of Brahmin (who became identified as white-skinned Aryans). It was only through faithful service to the upper classes, upper castes, or upper varna that the lower classes could be reborn after physical death into a higher class, caste or varna. This system of institutionalized exploitation based on race, ethnic origin and skin color became infamous. It survives today. In India, the Dalit Panther was named and modeled after the Black Panther Party in the U.S., and formed to combat institutionalized race-based exploitation, as a form of class oppression.

The Hindu caste system is an excellent example of how racism, including religious racism, serves ruling class interests by playing the race card as a means of maintaining a system of class-based oppression and destroying oppressed class unity at the bottom. Those who play the race card today are helping, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to destroy oppressed-class unity and thereby serve the interests of the ruling class.

The use of race and ethnic hatred has eroded class solidarity in every arena of oppressed society. Race and ethnic hatred is enforced throughout America's prisons, jails and detention facilities. The race and ethnic hatred card is played day and night to pit one group of detainees against another. Prison administrators have sponsored white inmate death squads to murder and frame black prisoners, and also non-whites to frame and murder white and non-white prisoner activists. Remember George Jackson — prisoners are more often than not assigned cells according to race and ethnic origin. New York City jails enforce a racially segregated telephone policy, with blacks on one set of phones and Latinos and whites on another. This is a classic if petty form of "divide and conquer."

Prostitution and Lip Service

Today the revolutionary potential of the movement is being exhausted by black, false leaders. Some of these false leaders, for financial and other forms of personal gain, have attacked the late Dr. Huey P. Newton, as an indirect means of attacking the legacy of the Black Panther Party and the future of our movement. Still other black, false leaders prostitute politics behind a profitable racism while paying lip service to real revolutionaries such as Malcolm X, and continue to destroy class unity through race and ethnic hate.

The only thing that really makes sense is for the oppressed of all racial and ethnic groups to unite as part of international class struggle for total, unconditional liberation, against international monopoly capital, the dominant form of class-based oppression. The first step is to pick up where the Black Panther Party left off, by organizing all-volunteer, community-based survival programs around the-food, housing, health-care and other life and death necessities. Organization along oppressed class lines, around the BPP program as a living example of class unity in the community, is what must be done. We call for volunteer community organizers NOW!!!

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author is serving a life prison sentence and is subject to police state terror and repression as daily reality. The leaders of the struggle and issues of the struggle arise from the struggle itself.

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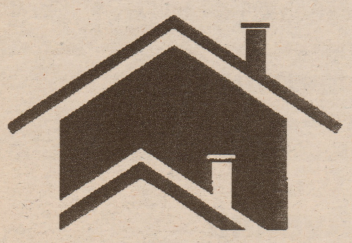

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Manley

Continued from page 4

election prefaced by several years of CIA-inspired psychological warfare, extensive violence, and terrorism in which over 700 people were killed. The resulting destabilization of the Manley government forced Manley to return to the International Monetary Fund for assistance upon his re-election in 1989.

Although Manley regained his seat as Prime Minister, at that time he resolved not to repeat the actions that had led to rocky relations with the United States during his previous term in office. Convinced that the international forces of production were too powerful, he bowed to the political and economic demands of the United States-dominated world market, all the while affirming his socialist views for economic and racial equality. Manley resigned in 1992 due to poor health.

He is survived by Glynne Ewert, his wife, and their children: David, Natasha, Sarah, Joseph, and Rachel.

Interview: PAC

Continued from page 8

own branches in the squatter camps, so they can do the work inside the squatter camps and improve their conditions in there. And the squatter camps situation is connected to the land question. The reason those people are homeless is because we have no say about our land at all. That's why they are hungry.

This is a speech I did in London last year (passing the green pamphlet "S. Africa Needs Large Brooms"). I think we need to close the doors, close the windows, and don't let nobody in, and don't let nobody out, and clean house. (laughs) The other thing that we really have a problem with is the prison situation is really bad. Because when Mandela was getting ready to come out, he said that all the political prisoners should be released. But that did not happen. He was released, and a few old men who were sick and ready to die, they were released. The people who were prominent, whose names were on the list of Amnesty International, they were released. But the rest of the prisoners were never released, and they are still there. Nobody is saying nothing about them no more. Those are still there, and then there are some new ones that were added. The other thing is with the AIDS. It is really bad, because during the apartheid era, they used to take names who had AIDS, and they would give them money, and tell them to go and rape women in the black community to spread the AIDS. So we have a high incidence of AIDS, from things like that. And then now in the prison what they do, they put them in one area, but what they do, is like when one person makes a mistake, or does something "wrong," they punish the whole group by holding back their medication. I mean there's a lot of stuff still going on. And it's not surprising because the military is still run by the same people and the police are still run by the same people. Just because you have a black face here and a black face there; it's still the same structure. It's still run by the same people with the same tactics. I was home one day when they were raiding Winnie's house. They knew that she wasn't home; they knew that she was out of the country. They knew that she wasn't running away from home, that she was coming, but they go and they raided her house. Just the same stuff they do before. They are still doing the same thing. And it was so strange, because a homeless group of people came on TV and they criticized the fact that they raided her house without her being home. The next day, the spokesperson of those homeless people (it was 200 homeless people), the spokesperson was found dead the next day. And the funniest thing, the media, every one of them says, "Oh, it is not related to the fact that he was talking about Winnie." And nobody says anything, but it was really strange. One day this man is talking about Winnie, and the next day he's found dead. The same old tactics.

GJ: How does PAC get the word out? Pamphlets like this?

NBG: Yes. Well at home, we do door to door, lot at home door to door. Outside, by giving out information.

Moore

Continued from page 4

which caused worldwide indignation. Inspired by the Party's stance on anti-racism, she joined the International Labor Defense and the Communist Party. In the 1930's she organized around housing issues, the Italian-Ethiopian war, racial prejudice in film and a host of other issues confronting poor and oppressed communities. She was a Communist Party candidate for the New York State Assembly in 1938 and for alderman in 1940. She was also a member of the National Association of Colored Women and the National Council of Negro Women.

By 1950 Queen Mother had resigned from the Communist Party. She helped found the Universal Association of Ethiopian Women, which worked on welfare rights, prisoners' rights, and anti-lynching. In 1963 she formed the Preparations Committee of Descendants of U.S. Slaves to demand reparations for Blacks from the government. She canvassed the country for signatures to petition the government and succeeded in presenting over a million signatures to President Kennedy in December, 1963, the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. In the late 1960's, Queen Mother was one of the first signers of the Republic of New Africa's independence charter, which called for the creation of five independently governed states.

In the early 1970's Queen Mother Moore began to travel throughout Africa, at the invitation of political leaders of newly independent African nations. She went to New Guinea, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria. In the early 1970's, she was officially installed as "Queen Mother" in an Ashanti ceremony in Ghana. In the late 1970's, she helped to found the Eloise Moore College of African Studies and Vocational and Industrial School in Parksville, New York in memory of her sister who had died in 1978.

Moore's long career of activism was slowed, but not stopped by declining health and advancing age. She remained a constant presence in New York political circles, and is known and loved by activists nationwide. She was present when Nelson Mandela came to New York in the summer of 1990, and she was one of only five invited speakers to address the Million Man March in October, 1995.

Queen Mother Moore's activism spanned almost a century. A skilled organizer, inspiring speaker and untiring warrior, Queen Mother Moore has provided an example of dedication and struggle that has rightfully earned her the title "Mother of the Modern Black Liberation Movement." Her legacy lives on.

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CCBPP STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP) is committed to the goals of the Black Panther Party (BPP) as outlined in its Ten-Point Program which was written in 1966 by Party founders, Dr. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

The Ten-Point Program outlines goals and objectives toward changing conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression in all low-income and working class communities in the U.S. and elsewhere, as the basis for unity and solidarity.

Also, the CCBPP is committed to the concept of Revolutionary Intercommunalism, introduced by Dr. Newton in 1970 at Boston College. Our Revolutionary Intercommunalism holds that there are basically two sides. On one side there is reactionary intercommunalism which presently holds the world's low-income and working communities under conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression by controlling the wealth, resources and institutions in order to maximize profits for the few. Huey identified this side as the leading reactionary side (the ruling class) which consists of a minority, fewer than five percent of the world population. Under these conditions, reactionary intercommunalism, by and large, keeps the poor and working communities on a cycle of degradation, under conditions of reaction, desperation and poverty, with no end in sight. Newton understood that in order to change these conditions and advance the economic and cultural interests of these oppressed communities of the world, disciplined organizations must be built from the bottom up, enabling these low-income and working communities to fight exploitation and oppression by any means necessary (this fight needs to start in the advanced industrialized U.S. because our nation leads the world in political reaction and economic exploitation).

CCBPP advances and upholds the goals which the BPP outlined in its Ten-Point Program, and those goals are about ridding black ghettos and low-income and working communities of economic exploitation and political oppression, understanding that we can reach these goals only by seizing the time at the point of practice.

Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program
WHAT WE WANT, WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. WE WANT FREEDOM, WE WANT POWER TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions that exist in our communities.

2. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all its people and give a high standard of living.

3. WE WANT AN END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALIST OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that the racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency that will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.

4. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING, FIT FOR THE SHELTER OF HUMAN BEINGS. We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people on our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.

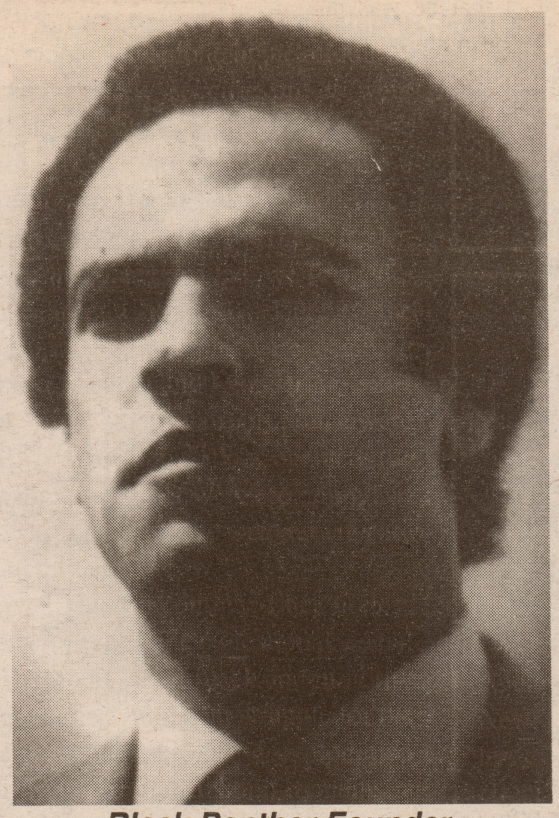
5. WE WANT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.

6. WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE. We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities that will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.

7. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES. We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against Black people, other people of color, and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.

8. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO ALL WARS OF AGGRESSION. We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desires of the U. S. ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the U. S. government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars that it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.

9. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND POOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U. S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY, AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR ALL PERSONS CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY. We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in U. S. prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the U. S. military are the victims of oppressive conditions that are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons brought to trial that they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trials.



Black Panther Founder, Dr. Huey P. Newton

10. WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY. When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism. It is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Geronimo Released!

Continued from page 1

even though it was a felony for him to do so.

The decision did not mention that the FBI had in its surveillance reports information that Geronimo was in fact

Courtesy of Willie Lee Bell

Ashaki Pratt and the Reverend Lorenzo Carlisle in front of S.F. Federal Building during a Geronimo hearing.

in Oakland at a Panther meeting at the time the crime took place in Santa Monica, 400 miles away. Reverend Jim McCloskey of Centurion Ministries, who investigated the case, reports six witnesses confirm Geronimo's presence in Oakland. Los Angeles District Attorney Gil Garcetti did not mention this fact when he announced that his office will appeal the order for a new trial.

"I think for us here, it is important to realize that the judge's decision, which was praised by Geronimo, does not expose the complicity of the people who framed him, knowing that he did not commit this crime," stated Valerie West, one of Geronimo's attorneys since 1985 and a member of the

Courtesey of Willie L. Bell

At a Sacramento, California Black Family Day Celebration on behalf of Geronimo, children listen to stories about their heritage.

Partisan Defense Committee, at a recent victory celebration held at her home.

"Judge Dickey's decision comes after more than a quarter century of persistence and determination of a nationwide grass roots organizing campaign to free ji Jaga (Pratt), under Geronimo's own disciplined leadership," stated Melvin Dickson, *The Commemorator* Editor and former Black Panther Party member.

"Despite Judge Dickey's decision, the Los Angeles DA has not yet dropped the charges against Geronimo, even though he has already served over 25 years in prison, because the United States government and the powers that be have decided that a black man of determination, discipline, stature, and revolutionary politics cannot be trusted in the outside community, the largest prison of all," stated Terry Cotton, former Black Panther Party member and Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party Advisory Board member.

The judicial system refused to grant Geronimo a new trial four times before this latest ruling, despite their knowledge of the real facts in the case that will eventually exonerate him.

"Geronimo has been imprisoned for 27 years," Cotton stated, "and the U.S. Justice Department and the FBI have been aware of his innocence since day one! They knew Julius Butler was a paid informant. They knew, according to their own agents' information, that Geronimo was 400 miles away when this crime occurred. In short, they have had the ability to free Geronimo for 27 years."

Los Angeles DA Never had a Case

Garcetti has affirmed that he stands behind a case based only on the testimony of a provocateur Julius "Julio" Butler, who in 1968 infiltrated the Black Panther Party as a part of the FBI's counterintelligence program (COINTELPRO). Today Butler has been thoroughly discredited by the overwhelming evidence that he purposely lied for the FBI to frame Geronimo, and worked for all levels of law enforcement apparatus, while facing assault charges himself. Butler was ultimately paroled.

"If Butler had died we would have never gotten a new trial for Geronimo, because the entire case is based on Butler's lies," stated the Reverend Lorenzo Carlisle, minister of the United Church of Christ in Oakland, who has over the years led members of his congregation in silent prayers, demonstrations, and to the Tehachapi and Mule Creek State Prisons, protesting and demanding Geronimo's release.

In 1996, Judge Dickey replaced Los Angeles County Judge Michael Cowell, after Cowell removed himself and all other Los Angeles judges from the case, stating that there was a possible conflict of interest because Geronimo's original prosecutor, Richard Kalustian, has since become a Los Angeles judge.

Punished for Refusal to Relinquish Beliefs

Now 49 years old, Geronimo, a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, with silver and bronze stars and two Purple Hearts, developed an interest in politices and met Bunchy Carter, then Defense Minister of the Southern California Chapter for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1968.

"Geronimo spent eight years in solitary confinement in retaliation for his political beliefs, and he endured tireless and brutal harassment in numerous California correctional facilities," according to attorney West. "The FBI followed this man to prison and they persecuted him even after he got to prison. To make sure he was kept in solitary, that was the point of all this," West continued. "A federal court finding in 1982 was significant in that it got Geronimo out of solitary confinement. He won vindication, despite the $1 he was rewarded."

In 1994 attorney West represented Geronimo in a civil suit against the California Department of Corrections to stop the constant harassment Geronimo was undergoing, and won a California Ninth Circuit Court decision for a single cell. This decision however, was revised a year and a half later. "It has been a long, hard fight and a lot of people have fought for this man, and correctly so," West explained.

It is because of Geronimo's unwillingness to relinquish his belief in the BPP movement or to compromise his innocence that he has been a target of systemic government harassment for over a quarter of a century.

Prior to his criminal case, Geronimo had become an important figure in the BPP. He was responsible for going to various Party locations and organizing classes on defense. These training programs enabled the BPP to maintain its level of structure, organization, and uniformity.

Geronimo's critical work within the Party was not unnoticed by the FBI. The FBI, under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover, instituted COINTELPRO. COINTELPRO was designed "to disrupt, neutralize, and discredit Black Nationalist groups which the Bureau characterized as 'Black Nationalist Hate Groups.'" COINTELPRO operations orchestrated Geronimo's arrest and conviction.

Photo by Commemorator

Former BPP members (left to right) John Seale, Ashaki Pratt, Willie Bell (CCBPP Advisory Board member) and Kathleen Cleaver, at a 1992 press conference on behalf of Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt).

"We can't forget that the economic and social conditions for the poor, working people and minorities are worse today than they were in 1968, despite the fact there are over 8,000 black elected officials," stated Dickson. "We can't forget Mumia, Ruchell, and the hundreds of lesser known political prisoners. We have to keep in mind that today United States prisons are filled with black and poor people, and that over one third of black males are either locked up or under the control of the United States criminal justice system. The United States government has declared economic war against the poor, inside and outside its borders."

"We are celebrating our brother's return and welcome him back to the community he fought so hard to free," Dickson concludes. "But we cannot end the fight when we win one battle. Until the freedom of all men and women is determined by the people, Geronimo's freedom will always be in danger of being taken away, as it is for all of us."

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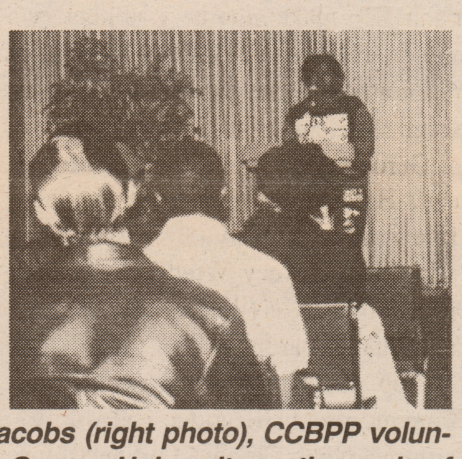
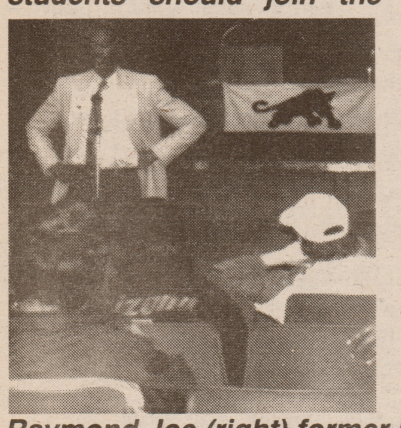
Commemorator: Northwest Regional Tour— Reuniting the Community

Melvin Dickson, Chairman of the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party, addresses an audience at Southern Oregon University on Black Panther history and the current work of CCBPP.

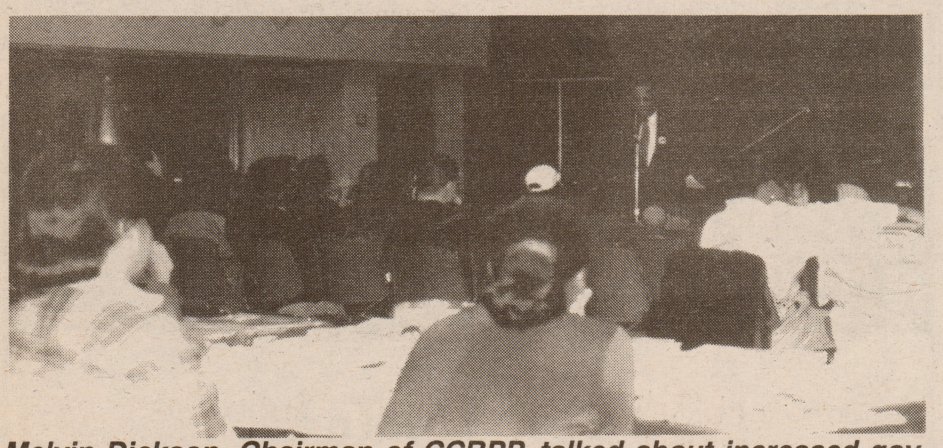
Kent Ford; founder of the BPP Portland Chapter, speaks about his experiences in the BPP.



Tiffany Hall (left photo) and Perlie Jacobs (right photo), CCBPP volunteers, address students at Southern Oregon University on the goals of the Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party and why students should join the struggle for community betterment.



Raymond Joe (right) former BPP member addresses Portland State University students on his experiences with the BPP as reaching black and minority and other students concerned with the struggle for liberation.



Melvin Dickson, Chairman of CCBPP, talked about increased government take-backs of social programs and the build-up of prison industry with taxpayers' money and the need to build fighting organizations from the bottom up.

Interview with Kent Ford: Founder of Portland Chapter of the Black Panther Party

In February Commemorator Editor Melvin Dickson and former member of the Black Panther Party Portland Chapter Raymond Joe, now on The Commemorator *staff, interviewed Kent Ford, founder in 1967 of Black Panther Party's Portland, Oregon Chapter. In honor of Black History Month, Melvin Dickson and Raymond Joe, accompanied by other staff and volunteers from The Commemoration Committee for The Black Panther Party, were invited to Portland for a speaking tour to publicize The Commemoration Committee and* The Commemorator *paper.*

MD: Kent, can you tell us about the formation of the Portland chapter, and comment on some of the economic, political and social changes in the country, which occurred during that time and how you see these problems today?

KF: Actually, the Portland chapter was started in late '67. Huey had just gotten shot in Oakland; King was killed shortly afterwards. So we had a lot of groups doing this and doing that, but nobody was doing any hard street organizing. There were many anti-war people around, and many of them were getting arrested. We printed about 25,000 "pocket lawyers" which were booklets describing the legal rights of a person taken into police custody. We had them cut down to size and we distributed them on the streets. Shortly afterward, riots broke out, and the police just rounded us all up and threw us in jail. I was in jail for several weeks on charges of inciting a riot. I got acquitted. I beat the case. I turned around and sued them and won $10,000 as a result of the case. And then, the repression really started coming down, coming out all over the place.

One example was what happened to a guy named Warren Wells. He had allegedly been involved in a shootout down in Oakland. The police caught Warren in Portland, and they tried to charge me, give me a case for harboring Warren.

With John Turner (former BPP member) we started the Fred Hampton Free People's Health Clinic back in 1969. It was the second free clinic in the country, next to Berkeley Free Clinic. And about a month later we started the Malcolm X Free People's Dental Clinic. We sustained these programs into the 80's; the beginning of the Reagan administration. The programs were around the corner from each other.

Repression was coming out all around. We had two sisters taking supplies from one clinic to another; and these policemen picked them up, took them to the station, held them, then let them go, and didn't charge them with anything. There was constant roughshadowing and harassment; people constantly being picked up for no reason.

MD: You're speaking of events nearly 30 years ago. Since then we've learned a lot about COINTELPRO, the murder of Fred Hampton, and the role of the FBI in infiltrating the BPP. Have you been able to learn anything similar in regards to the Portland chapter's early days?

KF: There were the breakfast programs—and what happened? The FBI files came out. We learned from a reporter in Washington, D.C., that one of the things said was that the FBI wanted to get hold of some oranges for the breakfast program. Their plan was

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Former Black Panther Party members (from left): Raymond Joe, Kent Ford, and Melvin Dickson together in Portland, during CCBPP Northwest speaking tour.

Archives: True Vehicle

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this country is a government within the government. What if the Mafia was guided by revolutionary concepts, that is to suppose the exploitive conditions in this country? Of course, I named immigrants who came here who found, through their vehicle, some avenues into American society, who could do this because of their particular make-up, basically because it was easier in some aspects for them to do it because they were also white.

For blacks, we have even more of a reason to establish a vehicle based upon ethnic politics. We have not done that. We have more reason than they, because they could see a way into this society, this white society. We cannot even see a way, but we have not had that political unit and again I refer back to the history of the destruction of the family. I would say that most whites are also oppressed by whites, just as we say that in the Greek society it was only democracy among the Greeks, but it was a slave society. You see, of the African slaves there, and slaves from other countries worked free in order in order to accomplish the pleasures and the democratic kind of dialogue of Greek philosophers. But if we analyze it very closely, we see that there was a breakdown within the Greek Society. All Greeks were not so free and so rich, but over all even the most underprivileged Greeks were more privileged than the slave.

We would have to analyze this in this country, but with our vehicle, first we will find what avenue we can take to deliver our freedom. You will know that all whites are not part of the noble ruling class, which is approximately 76 companies. We realize the privilege of most whites, because they are white. We also realize the other thing. Remember, there are contradictions in everything in the universe, so they are also victims. It is our job to get as many allies as possible in the world and in our community in order to transform it. So we would be very critical and realize the kind of contradictory nature of, say, the very poor white racists, who might spout off racism with a vehemence and more forceful than the rich white racist, you see. And we will understand this, we will also understand his contradiction, as he is also at war with the very rich white racist, you see. And we will play upon this and we will try to maximize this contradiction because we know that all qualitative transformation is based upon a quantitative increase. When we use a formula to analyze society to see whether it should be increased or decreased in order to get to our goal.

EDITOR: Time is very powerful. They say time will tell, and it has—the reforms they gave are being reclaimed, the pacifiers are being removed, the pretense of equality that swayed so many away from the pursuit of fundamental change, is gone.

The program of the Black Panther Party still stands, calling to the oppressed masses to take up the banner of "Power to the People" and organize for the BPP Ten-Point Program and platform as basis for that power. There is still time, and we must Seize the Time!

All Power to the People!

Kent Ford

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to get some syringes in order to inject all kinds of laxatives into the oranges to cause diarrhea. The purpose was to keep the kids and people from coming back to the breakfast program.

There was another time, the FBI sent a letter to about 40 doctors we had organized to work with us, the same amount of nurses, and all kinds of specialists working with our free medical clinics. The FBI called through the complete list of the medical directory and encouraged every doctor and nurse not to work in the Portland free clinic. They even tried to set up an alternative clinic themselves. They had some counter-rev's run it, just to try to discredit what the BPP was doing.

Back during the anti-war days, '67 through '71, John Turner was head of the Oakland-Berkeley chapter. He and Penny Jackson, George Jackson's sister, all those guys, came up to Portland and we took them around to different areas to speak. That was in '71. While they were up here, the FBI appeared at our door. I guess they were trying to keep track of John.

MD: BPP chapters across the nation underwent this kind of government attack for many years—was this true in Portland?

KF: Yes. Another time, a guy wearing a painter's uniform, came to my door. One of my kids began to go to answer the door, and I said, "Let Daddy get it." I answered the door and there was this guy who said, "Kent, you look like you need some help around here." As I found out later, he was an FBI agent in a painter's uniform. They were pulling all kinds of dirty tricks. So we struggled along 'til '79, trying to sustain the clinics, trying to maintain the breakfast programs, and the dental clinic. Just previous to and during the beginning of the Reagan era, things started coming down heavier again.

We lost one of our best friends, Jeff Washington, back in January '79. To this day, we don't know what happened to him. He was found dead in a car with a bullet in the back of his head. He was very active with us, and two weeks before we had beat the police on a case, which they didn't like very much. We had just come out of court and the police were in his neighborhood 24 hours a day, saying "We are going to get one of those guys." Two weeks later Jeff was found shot to death.

MD: Jeff was a member of the BPP's Portland chapter from the very beginning, right?

KF: Yes, he was in the BPP from the very beginning. Other groups came along using the BPP's principles and platforms. Some of them started selling all the issues we defined to the corporations and government for money. It was part of the FBI counter influence at the time. This was '79 when Jeff Washington was murdered. It wouldn't have been so bad but Jeff had a three month-old kid. He had spent a lot of time organizing in Oakland, at the central headquarters there. You had some groups here attempting to do things for the youth and the community; but there was no really hard-core struggle with people out on the streets going on.

MD: Some people say we have gotten through it; we have made it, and there is no need for any organizing around the goals for fundamental change, which the BPP spoke to. What is your opinion on that?

KF: The masses have not made it. There are still many groups, and unions that need to be organized. Labor problems, women's issues, gangs and unemployment—fights for decent housing, and decent education. The statistics are that one out of every three kids/black men are on probation, parole or in prison. The struggle will never be over. It's a constant struggle.

***Editor's Note: Kent Ford** currently works as a weight trainer at the Matt Dishman Community Center, which provides skills training, and drug counselling in Portland's black working class community.*

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